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LATEST STATE CRIME STATISTICS RELEASED

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today released the current crime statistics for North Dakota, which confirm the state's ranking and reputation as the safest state in the nation.

"We know North Dakota is a great place to raise a family. We know our neighbors, and we take pride in belonging to our community," said Stenehjem. "The ranking probably does not come as a surprise, but some of the statistics might."

In 2003, 13,015 "crime index offenses" were reported by law enforcement agencies across the state. This is a 14.6 percent decrease from the 2002 total of 15,239. "Crime index offenses" are those serious offenses as defined by the FBI crime reporting program to enable comparisons of crime rates among the states. They include the violent crimes of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, and the property crimes of burglary, larceny/theft and motor vehicle theft. Juveniles accounted for less than one-half of crime index offense arrests.

Violent crime comprised only 3.8 percent of the total index offenses reported. The "violent crime" category includes murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. The total number of violent crimes reported was 499 - a decrease of 9.8 percent from the total of 553 violent crimes reported in 2002. There were twelve murders in 2003, eight of which involved domestic violence. The state averages eleven murders each year.

Property crimes accounted for 96.2 percent of the total index offenses reported in 2003. The number of property crimes decreased 14.8 percent from the 2002 total of 14,686 to 12,516 in 2003. Over \$11.4 million dollars worth of property was reported stolen in 2003.

The total number of arrests reported by local law enforcement agencies increased from 29,145 in 2002 to 30,334 in 2003. Approximately nine percent of the total arrests were for "crime index" offenses.

The state's three largest cities experienced significant decreases in "crime index" offenses compared to previous years, with crime down 26.7% in Fargo, 23% in Bismarck, and 14% in Grand Forks. A national survey conducted by Morgan Quitno ranked Fargo and Bismarck in the top 25 safest metropolitan areas in the nation. Fargo placed 24th while Bismarck placed in the top ten.

Drug arrests climbed by more than 16 percent in 2003, continuing a trend established over the past decade. Total drug arrests in 2003 were 2,045 compared to 1,752 in 2002. Juveniles accounted for 12.2%, of drug arrests, down from last year. The arrests for the drug category which includes meth have increased by 10.6% since 2002.